

the Galana River and Voi (East African Bird Report 1977. Lack et al. in press).

The pair I watched were observed on the afternoon of 25 February 1979 and were engaged in aerial insect catching. As is typical of the species this pursuit was frequently conducted from different perches, often 20 - 30 m apart.

The increased extension of the Somali Bee-eater's range is of interest and appears to have followed elephant habitat destruction which has caused the opening up of previously more wooded areas. My own conjecture for these extensions had been linked to the prevailing drier conditions to which Tsavo had been subjected, and this appeared to have been borne out by observations of Somali Bee-eaters in drought conditions in the Buffalo Springs area of the Isiolo Game Reserve. However, with the past eighteen months of good rainfall, I tend to agree with L.S.C. Parker (pers. comm.) that, at least in Tsavo, the increase or extension of range of this species is more likely to be attributable to the recent opening up of suitable habitat than to the arid conditions.

REFERENCES

EAST AFRICA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY 1977. Species report. *Scopus*. 1: 121.

LACK, P.C., LEUTHOLD, W. & SMEENK, C. (in press): Check List of the birds of Tsavo East National Park, Kenya. *Journal of the East African Natural History Society and National Museum*.

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There is a recent unpublished record of two Somali Bee-eaters seen along the Tsavo River, 8 km south of the Mombasa road on 1 March 1976 by D.J. Pearson.

Ed.

RIVER WARBLERS IN SONG IN KENYA River Warblers *Locustella fluviatilis* occur annually on passage in late November/December in southeast Kenya. Numbers recorded away from Ngulia Lodge are small however, for this is an unobtrusive species of low thicket and herbage. Most birds have been located by their call, a persistent repeated 'chick-chick-chick'. Whilst watching a River Warbler emerging at the top of a small bush at Mito Andei on 9 December 1978 GJJ was surprised to hear and see it deliver a short burst of song, a jangling 'zi-zi-zi-zi-zi-zi . . .', identical to that with which he was acquainted on the Central European breeding grounds. The same song was heard by both of us from four sites along a few hundred metres of a small river valley immediately west of Mito Andei at 0900-1000 h on 12 December. We were eventually able to obtain a view of one of the birds singing from the bottom of a thick bush. Bursts of song lasted for several seconds, the basic syllable being repeated continuously, four to five times a second. At the end of December 1978 a few River Warblers were temporarily resident in the bush near Ngulia Lodge. At 0700-0900 h on 28 and 29

on 28 and 29 December birds were repeatedly heard by DJP singing from two patches of thicket in particular, and one of these was seen.

River Warbler song does not appear to have been previously recorded in Africa. However, because of its resemblance to certain insect noises, and a marked similarity to the jangling display calling of some *Euplectes* species, it has probably often been overlooked. When not engaged in active moult, most other Palaearctic warblers sing quite vigourously in winter quarters and at passage stopover sites in East Africa. Now that it has been recognised, song may prove a useful aid in locating River Warblers in Kenya and Tanzania in future.

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For example. The paper on Bee-eaters by Hegner *et al.* in *Scopus* 3 (1), would cost US\$ 36 or Shs. 225/- for 25 -100 copies by surface mail. The Ngulia paper in *Scopus* 3 (1) would cost Shs. 355/- for 25 - 100 copies.

SEABIRD WATCH

During July and August 1979, Dr C.J. Feare will be ringing, colour ringing and dyeing seabirds (mainly gulls and terns) and Crab Plovers on the coast of Arabia. The aim of this is to attempt to trace the post-breeding dispersal of the seabirds and to relate this to the geographical distribution of ticks that parasitize the birds.

Would all visitors to the East African coast and islands of the western Indian Ocean please keep a look out for ringed and dyed seabirds and report any sightings *Direct* to Dr C.J. Feare, Greenfields, The Street, Ewhurst, Surrey, England.